

Chapter 5

Implementation

Introduction

Plan implementation is the activity to accomplish the [management direction](#) of the Forest Plan, and is necessary to meet public expectations of Forest Service actions and legal requirements. It is mainly accomplished through the recurrent identification of proposed actions (initiated by the Forest Service or in response to external applications by individuals or groups) consistent with activities anticipated in the Plan; the analysis and evaluation of such actions (and reasonable alternatives to them); related documentation and decision-making; and project execution and administration, in a manner that is consistent with the management direction of the Plan. It also involves meeting the Plan's monitoring and evaluation requirements, and making needed Plan amendments.

The [management direction](#) elements of this Plan include:

1. The Forest multiple-use Goals and Objectives contained in Chapter 2;
2. The designated Suitable Timber Land and associated Allowable Timber Sale Quantity contained in Appendix A and Chapter 2;
3. The [Management prescriptions](#), including the [Land Use Designations](#) shown on the Plan map and their related Standards and Guidelines contained in Chapter 3 & 4; and,
4. The [Monitoring](#) and [Evaluation](#) requirements contained in Chapter 6.

Plan implementation is strongly influenced by annual budget direction and fiscal limitations. Each year, upon approval of a budget, the Forest Supervisors develop and implement annual programs of work. The accomplishment of these annual programs is to result in the incremental achievement of the Plan's [management direction](#). Future budget requests are to be based on the management direction of this Forest Plan, and related project and activity scheduling.

Schedules of Forest Service proposed activities for some resources are presented in Appendix L. Such schedules are to be updated frequently to keep them current. Additional proposals by others (such as for the development of communications facilities on the Forest by private firms) will also be considered and evaluated for compliance with all applicable direction in this Plan, as well as applicable laws and higher-level Forest Service policy and regulations.

Procedural guidance for Plan implementation is provided in the Forest Service Planning Handbook (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 5).

Implementation

Plan and Project Level Decisions

Planning for units of the National Forest System includes two levels of decision-making.

Forest Plan Decisions: The first decision level involves the development of a Forest Plan to provide direction for all resource management programs, practices, uses, and protection measures. This Plan provides the broad, programmatic direction necessary to manage the resources and uses of the Tongass National Forest in a coordinated and integrated manner. It includes the above listed [management direction](#) elements, which are to influence how subsequent site-specific project decisions are made and how other management activities are conducted. The [Management Prescriptions](#), and the related Standards and Guidelines, are applied in planning individual projects, for example. Adjustments to this direction may be made through Plan amendments. Plan-level decisions are appealable under 36 [CFR](#) 217.

Project Planning Decisions: The second decision level involves the analysis and implementation of [management practices](#) designed to achieve the [management direction](#) of the Forest Plan. Project decisions (which can change the environment) generally require site-specific analysis to meet [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA) requirements for decision-making, and are subject to continuing compliance with other Federal environmental laws such as Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and Clean Air Act. Common project-level decisions include whether or not, and in what way, timber will be harvested in a particular area; a campground will be constructed; or a fisheries structure will be installed. The preparation of an environmental analysis document, such as an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, precedes these decisions, unless they are categorically excluded from documentation. Project-level planning provides an additional opportunity (beyond development of this Plan) for [public participation](#). Project decisions are appealable under 36 [CFR](#) 215.

Additional Analysis

Additional analysis in support of Plan implementation activities may also be conducted at various scales above the site (project) level. Doing these analyses can improve our understanding of ecosystems and associated social and economic dimensions, and provide important context information for project planning. This kind of analysis does not require NEPA review and does not result in decisions which are subject to appeal. Additional analyses are not prescribed here; development of additional analyses are identified by the appropriate line officer(s). The need, scope and intensity of analysis is based on the combination of issues, values and risks, such as internal issues and public concerns and interests; land characteristics and geologic risk; presence of threatened, endangered or [sensitive species](#); other biological information; and, past land use activities and [watershed](#) condition.

[Watershed analysis](#), for example, is designed to help set the stage for project planning and NEPA analysis, focus interdisciplinary discussion on key watershed-level management issues, and provide a basis for integrating project designs. [Watershed analysis](#), as is described in Appendix J, is not a decision-making process, and a Watershed analysis report is not a decision document, a planning document requiring NEPA review, or a regulatory, prescriptive document.

Plan Amendments

The Plan's [management direction](#) elements may be amended as the need arises. The need to amend the Plan may result from:

1. Recommendations of an [Interdisciplinary Team](#), based on the results of monitoring and evaluation.

2. Determinations by the Forest Supervisors that existing or proposed projects, permits, contracts, cooperative agreements, or other instruments authorizing occupancy and use are appropriate, but not consistent with elements of the Plan's management direction.
3. Administrative appeal decisions.
4. Planning errors found during Forest Plan implementation.
5. Changes in physical, biological, social or economic conditions.

The Forest Supervisors will determine whether proposed changes in the Forest Plan are significant or non-significant. ("Significance" here is as defined by the [National Forest Management Act](#) regulations, and is different than significance as used under the [National Environmental Policy Act](#).)

Non-significant Amendments: If a proposed amendment is determined to be non-significant, the Forest Supervisors will document the determination and describe the change in a decision document, after environmental analysis, and provide public notification prior to implementing the changes. Non-significant amendments applicable to only one of the three Administrative Areas may be made by that Area's Forest Supervisor. Non-significant amendments applicable to more than one of the three Administrative Areas must be made by the Forest Supervisors of the affected Areas.

Non-significant amendments to the Forest Plan may result from:

1. Actions that do not substantially alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management. This includes actions whose effects have already been analyzed, evaluated and disclosed at the Forest Plan level.
2. Minor adjustments to [Land Use Designation](#) boundaries, [management prescriptions](#), or Forest-wide standards and guidelines resulting from improved understanding of resource conditions, further inventory, or site-specific analysis.
3. Short-term fluctuations in projects to be implemented or in planned annual outputs.

Significant Amendments: If the proposed amendment is determined to be significant, the decision about the change then rests with the Regional Forester, who will also prepare a decision document after environmental analysis. The development and approval of a significant amendment must follow the same procedures as were required for developing and approving the Forest Plan (or its revision).

Significant amendments to the Forest Plan may result from:

1. Changes that have a major effect on the entire Forest Plan, or that affect land and resources throughout a large portion of the [planning area](#) (for example, identification of a threatened or endangered species with major area-wide increases or decreases in resource demands).
2. Changes that would significantly alter the long-term relationship between the amounts of resource uses and Forest products originally projected

Implementation

(such as changes in implementation schedules resulting from sustained differences between proposed and actual budgets).

3. Major changes in [management prescriptions](#) or [Land Use Designation](#) allocations, or in [Forest-wide standards and guidelines](#).

It is anticipated that most Forest Plan amendments will be non-significant in nature.

Adaptive Management

[Adaptive management](#) is a fairly new term for an old concept. It is the [ecosystem management](#) counterpart to "learning from experience." All such concepts have two essential elements in common: 1) a feedback element which gathers and evaluates information about current performance (of an action or activity), and 2) an adjustment element which responds to feedback information by being able to alter future performance when needed. (See Bormann et al., Adaptive Ecosystem management in the Pacific Northwest, 1994, for a fuller discussion of these ideas.)

For forest planning, two key aspects of [adaptive management](#) are the monitoring and evaluation process (see Chapter 6) which provide feedback on implemented activities and the effectiveness of associated resource protection or mitigation measures, and the amendment process (described above), which allows for making necessary changes to those activities and measures. Monitoring is one source of feedback information; other sources include scientific literature and studies, resource inventories, changes in technology, and public concerns. However, monitoring at the plan and project levels is a primary means by which the continued appropriateness of management techniques will be evaluated. Thus it is an indispensable part of ongoing forest management. Adaptive management is both the recognition of these sources as potential signals for change, and the willingness, through environmental analysis and the plan amendment process, to positively respond to these signals. It is also the recognition that forest planning, and [ecosystem management](#), will never have complete or "perfect" information, but that planning can minimize uncertainty by including the ability to adapt to change.

This Forest Plan embraces these adaptive management concepts.

Plan Revisions

The Plan will ordinarily be revised on a 10-year cycle, or at least every 15 years. It may also be revised whenever the Forest Supervisors determine that conditions in the area covered by the Forest Plan have changed significantly, or when changes in national policies, goals, or objectives would have a significant effect on Forest-level programs. In the [monitoring](#) and [evaluation](#) process, an [Interdisciplinary Team](#) may recommend a revision (or an amendment) of the Forest Plan at any time.

Revisions are not effective until considered and approved in accordance with the requirements for the development and approval of the Forest Plan. Revisions must be approved by the Regional Forester. The Forest Supervisors will review conditions in the area covered by the Forest Plan at least every five years to determine whether significant changes have occurred. A component of this review will be an interagency evaluation of the overall [old-growth](#) habitat and riparian strategies.